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THE
HEART OF HINDUISM.

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THE HEART OF HINDUISM.

I. The Jarring Notes Now.

It was a remark of the German critic Heine, directed against such philosophers as Kant, Fichte, and Schelling, that the moment a religion solicits the aid of philosophy, its ruin is inevitable. The history of Hinduism shows that, always soliciting the aid of philosophy in its own way, it has, whether for good or evil, managed to hold its own in this country for centuries; and it looks even now as if, notwithstanding our age of reason and science, and the attacks of reformers, Hinduism goes its own way, indifferent to the comments of higher criticism. But the fact in reality is not so and has never been so. Hinduism, as we now see it, is not one religion but many, a mixture of creeds and a cult of compromises. Hence the difficulty of defining it. For some months now there has been a controversy in important centres of Hindu life and thought over the questions: "What is Hinduism?" and "Who and what is a Hindu?" Various answers have been given but with little agreement among the combatants. A learned judge of one of our High Courts, himself a high-caste Hindu, respected for his piety and knowledge of the Shastras, declared recently in his presidential address at a Social Conference, that no one could be regarded as a Hindu, who did not believe in the infallibility of the Vedas as God's revelation. At first sight this seems a safe definition. But tested by the facts of history and of current life, it proves unsatisfactory. The two questions above stated were raised in connection with a certain official document now remembered as the Gait Circular. Mr. Gait, the Census Officer of the Government of India, denied that Mahars and others of the untouchable class were Hindus. The Hindu community throughout India protested. Now, many of these untouchables have no idea of the Vedas, and such of them as have have been heard to say that the Vedas have been their ruin and have, therefore, no binding force. Tukaram, the Maratha Saint, chanted hymns saying that even the Vedas could not

comprehend God: and he is still regarded as a Hindu. Nay, the Vedas themselves declare that their voice became silent before the impenetrable mystery and majesty of God.

Idol-Worship.

Perhaps the learned Judge had in mind the fact that, when Buddhism and Jainism proclaimed war against Hinduism and denied the infallibility of the Vedas, the upholders of Hinduism denounced the Buddhists and Jains as *pakhandis*, meaning atheists and apostates. But Hinduism all the while did not fail to borrow from the very apostates whom it condemned. We have the high authority of the eminent Orientalist, Sir Ramkrishna Bhandarkar, that idol-worship, which prevails so largely, almost universally, among Hindus, is conspicuous by its absence in the teachings of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita; and that it was probably borrowed by Hinduism from the Buddhists and the Jains. These latter did not believe in a personal Deity; but when any of their great men died they made statues and busts of them and worshipped them. And Hinduism has followed in their wake. Nevertheless, such is the uncritical spirit rampant among us, most educated Hindus defend idol-worship as if it was of the essence of Hinduism. If it were, we should not have had that sweet chant of the Maratha Saint Namdev, condemning the worship of idols and citing the authority of his preceptor, Visoba Khechar, a Brahmin. And Visoba Khechar and his disciple Namdev are unto this day reverenced as holy Hindus.

The saint Ramdas has in his caustic manner pointed out the evil of idols and idol-worship: "Many gods have risen and run riot; it is a medley of ghosts and deities; the One Supreme God has been forgotten; so all has become a hotch-potch of worship. Hence the thinking power has been destroyed. Who knows the difference between the true and the false in this market cry of the *Shastras* and the noises of the gods? So everything has come to ruin and the power of discriminating between truth and untruth has been lost." No wonder when educated Hindus talk and write in defence of idol-worship as if it constituted the heart of Hinduism, some Christian critics of that religion take them at their word and become uncritical themselves. But a few months ago, a Christian dignitary, addressing a Christian congregation, reminded them that they were living in the land of the heathen and asked them to pray for the heathen people of this land in the words uttered from the Cross: "Father, forgive them, for they do not

know what they do." I am not sure that a prayer uttered with reference to Pharisees and Sadducees, who were not of the heathen, is apt with reference to a people because these worship idols. The teaching of the Master himself is a lesson to us on this point. In all He said there is not a word of condemnation of idol-worshippers, although the atmosphere was full at the time of idolatry. And that was not because the Master approved of idol-worship but it was because He, who gazed into the hearts of men, saw that the worship of idols is not the only idolatry, but there is, equally bad, the idolatry of the heart, of pride, place and fortune. And, if we bear that in mind, who from among us, whether in Asia or Europe, America or Africa, can escape condemnation as heathen, and hearing the deep and silent voice of the Master teaching us all the prayer: "Father, forgive us, for we do not know what we do."

Hinduism Baffles Definition.

Neither the Vedas then nor the custom of idol-worship can give us an insight into the heart of Hinduism. Within the fold of Hinduism itself, the fallibility of the former and the degradation of the latter have been proclaimed and asserted by large bodies of men, who yet are acknowledged Hindus. To get to that heart is not, I admit, easy, because Hinduism, as it is now, is a creation of many and diverse teachings, or, as some of our books declare, it is an ocean difficult to fathom. Hence the jarring notes now among those who attempt to define it. Where great scholars and learned Judges have failed, it would be presumptuous on my part to make the attempt and define what Hinduism is and who is a Hindu. "Sir," said I the other day to a Shastri, conversation with whom has been of great benefit to me, "Sir, have you observed what they have been saying about Hinduism?" He asked: "What have they been saying?" I replied: "The question has been raised "What is Hinduism?", and many have answered; but no two agree." My Shastri, steeped as it were in the dialectics of the master-mind, Shri Shankaracharya, rejoined as follows: "The fact that people do not agree in their definition of Hinduism points of itself to its all-comprehensiveness. Hinduism baffles all definition like *Brahma*, (God) whom it worships. The ancient *Rishis* sought to define *Brahma* as *This* and *That*, and failing, ended by defining *Brahma* as "Not This or That." This is the Shastric way; it does not solve the question but it points a moral. That question was definitely started in connection with what is now known as the Basu Bill, to confound those

who opposed that proposed legislation on the ground that, if it became law, and permitted intermarriages between Hindus and non-Hindus, or between Hindus of different castes, it would endanger Hinduism and lead to chaos. For the purposes of that controversy, the question "What is Hinduism?" may be of great and practical use. To meet the logic of orthodoxy and bewilder it, the question has value as one of dialectics. But life is not logic altogether, it is more than logic; and no orthodoxy or bigotry has been killed by mere reasoning. It is more to the purpose of the needs of these times, the demands of the voice of the age, to enquire in a humble spirit, what the central truth of Hinduism is, and how that truth has, amidst its vicissitudes, illustrated itself in the lives of the people. You know the health of a man, it is said, from the condition of his extremities. So in the case of a people, to know the heart of their religion, you must go to the humblest and lowliest of them. Those on whose toil we live, who know no luxury and who live in huts—talk and converse with these, I humbly think, lets us into the heart of Hinduism as nothing else can, for, from their lives, thoughts, and struggles we come to know in a vivid manner both the dignity and the degradation of Hinduism—the dignity of its essential truth, the degradation it has suffered in consequence of drift from that truth.

II. Hermit or Householder?

No sacred text has more powerfully exercised deep influence on the Hindu community of all shades of caste and opinion than that which is embodied in the words *dharma, artha, kama* and *moksha*, meaning, duty, wealth, desires, and final absolution or salvation. This has become a household text, familiar more or less to the highest and the lowliest of Hindus. It forms the pivot of Hindu society. It has been the soul, so to say, of Hindu philosophy and theology; round it has raged many a controversy. The Hindu jurist has borne it in mind in laying down the principles of Hindu law; and the Hindu law-books, from which our courts take their *dicta* for the administration of justice, refer to it now and again as if it formed the root of law as of religion and society. The lower classes of Hindu society may not utter it as do the higher classes, but familiar talk with them as to the destiny of man in this world soon convinces you that the spirit of the text has formed their views and ideals of life.

The text means that man lives for the pursuit of four objects in this world—for duty, for the acquisition of wealth, for the satisfaction of his desires, and, lastly, for the attainment of salvation after death. Some exponents of Hinduism represented by the school of Jaimini, called the Mimamsaka school, to which a Hindu lawyer, well-knowing his duty, turns for the interpretation of an obscure or difficult text in the authoritative works on Hindu law, deny the last of these four objects. According to them, there is no such thing as *moksha* or salvation as a separate object; the first object, *dharma*, meaning duty, involves and leads to salvation. Jaimini's opponent, Badarayana, the father and founder of what is called the *Vedanta* school, holds to salvation as a distinct object by itself. However this be, the text itself, as it is, is practically accepted as phrasing life's ideals by the Hindu community and even the meanest *coolie* has some consciousness of it.

What is Dharma?

Of the four objects, *dharma* or duty has predominance. This is the second universal truth of Hinduism. There is no jarring note as to that. Duty is taken to be the predominant object, because the other objects derive their source and strength from it. Then comes the question, what is *Dharma* or Duty? It

means, primarily, belief in the Deity, and secondarily, the performance of all the duties, sacred and secular, prescribed by the *Shastras* and society. What these duties are, whether the Vedas are all in all—that is a tangled web of Hindu religion and society; but writing as a layman for lay readers, anxious to put my finger on what has been accepted by all exponents of Hinduism of acknowledged authority as a maxim of universal truth, I may say that the highest *Dharma*, i.e., Duty, is laid down by all as consisting in what is called *atma darshana*, meaning the realisation of the Supreme Spirit which is in every human being. That word *darshana* again is a household word among Hindus. The Bhatia or Bania, man or woman, whom you see in the early hours of the morning or at sunset in Bhuleshwar, going to pay his or her homage to the Vallabhacharya Maharaja, will tell you, when you ask where they are going, that they are going for *darshana*. Literally it means "to see," but, spiritually—and the word embodies a spiritual idea—it means "a vision," the master light of seeing. The pilgrim goes to his sacred place of pilgrimage for his *darshana*, that is, realising his vision of God. So also, when the King Emperor was at Delhi, and large crowds of people used to assemble on the roads, from where they expected their Sovereign and the Queen Empress to pass, and policemen with their batons used to press the crowds back and tell them to go away, the words of the police being: *Jao hyase* (go away from here), the assembled people were heard to say: *Badshaha ke darshana karke jayange* (we shall go after making the *darshana* of the Emperor).

So *atma darshana*, which Hinduism recognises as the highest duty, means a vision of the Supreme Soul who resides in each of us, and the vision or *darshana* means realising the Supreme, not merely seeing but attaining to Him, becoming at one with Him. It is best interpreted in the words: "Behold, the Kingdom of God is within you!"

How is this "vision" to be realised? That, again, is a vexed question of Hindu theology and philosophy. Some say, by *karma*, or action; others say, by *jnana* or knowledge. The Bhagavat Purana has a passage in which the differences of opinion on this point are mentioned and God is made to say:—"I am not pleased with the practices of *Yoga* (meditation and action), or with the religion of Sankhya (knowledge), or with the study and following of the Vedas, or with performance of penances, or by renunciation, or sacrifices, or charity and acts of public utility, or by alms, or fasts or worship of gods, or recitation of secret *mantras*, or visits to sacred places, or rules of restraint and religious observances, so

much as I am pleased by the company of the Good, which destroys all other companionship." The *Bhagavad-Gita* brushes aside all these different modes of realisation of the Supreme and centres it in Love of God and Man, which is the same thing as saying: "Love the Lord, thy God, and love thy neighbour as thyself."

The Acquirement of Love

But love is an active quality. How is it best acquired, if the supreme end of existence is *atma darshana* or realisation by each of us of the Supreme Soul and the salvation consequent upon that realisation? Here again, we have one school within the fold of Hinduism divided against another. According to one school, man has four stages in life. Beginning as a student, living the life of a bachelor, he passes to the second stage, that of marriage, and becomes a *grihasta* or householder; then he enters on the third stage, that of an anchorite; and he ends by becoming an ascetic (*yati*). Unless he ends his life as an ascetic, he can find no salvation; there is no true *atma darshana* for him. The first three stages, well-lived, may lead him to heaven after death but he must come back to earth and pass through its turmoil again and again. The other school holds otherwise. According to it, the householder, who lives the active life of a family man, and serves his fellows and his country, who is, in other words, what Green calls "the honest citizen," can find salvation without ending his old age in asceticism, provided he acquires wealth justly, is cultured, is hospitable to guests, keeps sacred the memory of his ancestors and the saints and sages, and is, above all, truthful. This latter school is represented by the Bhagavad-Gita and by the great Yajnyavalkya, the legislator of Hindus, greater than even Manu, because all Hindu law and polity, as now observed, derive their force from him. Yajnyavalkya himself ended his days as an ascetic, after having distributed his property among his wives. But he knew better than he practised—he knew man was a sociable animal and that asceticism must mean the decay of society. And his teaching constitutes the heart of Hinduism. It is a trite saying that a Hindu lives to marry; and it is true that caste and custom have marred the glory and sanctity of the institution of marriage as the means of *atma darshana*. But Yajnyavalkya knew what asceticism and celibacy must lead to in civilised societies—witness the condition of France just now. So his gospel given to Hindus was in effect this: "Become *grihastas* or householders." And following him the sages of Hinduism have laid down: "Asceticism and celibacy are not for the age of Kaliyug, which means the present age."

The "Mild Hindu."

The Vishnu Purana, which charmed the soul of Emerson, upholds the householder as the only favourite of God and makes light of the ascetic as a person of little or no worth. The Bhagavad-Gita was written to keep men to the world to perform their duty by action and an active life, instead of running away from it in the name of God and despising it. So also Ramdas, the saint of Maharasthra, says: "Live the ordered life of a family man and realise the Supreme Soul and then you will gain both this world and the next." And saints such as Tukaram preached the same.

The heart of the Hindu community, then, is at the core the heart of the man who tries to win and realise the Kingdom of God within him by means of the life of a householder, keeping his home to serve his society and State, because it is the home out of which come the State and Heaven. But the school of asceticism has not failed to exercise its sinister influence on that heart, and so the Hindu has come to be a mixture of the householder and the ascetic; he struggles blindly between the two, and hence the "mild Hindu," his chaos and confusion, his innumerable castes, and dissensions. And yet there is the heart, would we but see it, hear it whole, and bring it back to its original soundness!

III. Malhari the Mahar.

One of the most touching episodes in the biographies of the statesmen who took part in forming and founding the British Empire in India is that connected with the life and career of each of the two brothers, Henry Lawrence and John Lawrence. They were among the heroes of British India in the mutiny period. They were devoted to each other; but each had his angle of view different from that of the other on public questions. Henry befriended the cause of the aristocracy in India. To keep up the prestige of the ruling classes and nobles was his main ideal of Government. John, who afterwards became Viceroy of India, and was a zealous Christian, was for the elevation of the masses; and to him is ascribed the saying that even the meanest and most illiterate *coolie* in India can think and talk of the immortality of the soul in a manner which would have put to shame the average Athenian of the time of Socrates and Plato.

We meet daily with proofs of that saying as we mix with men of the lower classes in Hindu society and hold converse with them. Of many of that kind which I could narrate, here is one which is apposite to my purpose as revealing the obscured heart of Hinduism.

The Pious Pilgrim.

I happened one morning to visit an enlightened and pious Hindu lady whose name is well-known throughout India. As she was speaking to me in chaste and classical Marathi, which makes her conversation graceful, an old, almost blind man, scantily clad and dirty, came up, led by a woman, and addressing the lady said: "Bai Saheb" (meaning, Madam), "Malhari greets you and begs for alms. A few days more and he will be off to Pandharpur for his annual pilgrimage." "Very well," replied the lady, "Malhari, come to me just the day before you start for Pandharpur and I will pay you your railway fare." "What, Bai Saheb!" cried Malhari (that was his name) "talk you of railway? Not for me. Here is a pair of legs which my Vithya" (meaning the God Vithoba of Pandharpur), "has given me, and so long as these last, not for me your railway. I shall trudge on to Pandharpur with the help of these legs of mine." "Be it so," answered the lady, "when you start, I will

give you something. Come then." The man left and soon after, happening to meet him, I entered into conversation with him.

He was a Mahar, of the caste of Chokha Mela, the Mahar saint, whom Hinduism holds in deep reverence. This Malhari spoke to me of human life as a prison; he sang hymns comparing man to a parrot confined in a cage, with his soul encased in his body ready to flit after death to its home, where dwells God, and become absorbed in Him, if while on earth the man has led a righteous life, and despised *samsara* (the world). Having listened to Malhari for half an hour, as he was sermonising and singing, I questioned him. "Now, Malhari, you talk of a righteous life. May I ask what your life has been? You go about abegging; you live on charity; what has brought you to this pass? You say this *samsara* (world) is nothing and we must despise it. And yet you have a wife?"

The Story of his Life.

To Malhari my question was a poser. The woman with him was his wife; and to a Hindu, be he high or low, his wife is his *samsara*, his symbol of his world and worldliness. "Sir," said he, "you have hit the weakest point in me, and I do not know how to answer. You are my master and I, an ignorant Mahar, must tremble to argue with you." "But tell me your story, Malhari. Be frank and I will not judge you." "Very well, Sir," he replied, "hear the story of my life's burden. I was not born a beggar; my parents left, when they died, three sons including myself, and some lands as our patrimony. The lands are situated in a village near Khadkala. All three of us brothers married and lived together by cultivating the lands. In course of time my eye-sight began to fail me and I could not work. Nor could my wife work, for she had to help me. We had no children; my brothers had. Quarrels began and they ill-treated me and my wife. Tired of life, I felt I ought to give up the world and become an ascetic. But an ascetic with a wife? How could that be? So I went to Dehu, the birthplace of the saint, Tukaram, to consult some holy man there. I met one and begged him to be my *Guru* (preceptor), and give me a *mantra* (a sacred chant for constant utterance)." He said to me: "Malhari, you are illiterate; what *mantra* can I give to a man who can neither read nor write? Do this—give up your lands and your brothers; give up the world; chant the name of Hari (God); visit Pandharpur at least once a year and live on alms, What about my wife? I asked the Guru. Let her follow you, he

advised. That was enough for me. Since then I have left lands, home and brothers, and have been half ascetic, half householder, wandering about, living on charity, and yet keeping a sort of home, dull and dreary and that because of my Bhagu." Here Malhari's wife interposed. "Look here, Sir," she said, "how haughty he is! He calls me Bhagu, as if I was of no value, and he complains because I am a drag on him and because, with me by his side, he cannot be a full-fledged ascetic." Malhari retorted: "That is woman's pride! I call her by her pet name, Bhagu, but she wants me to use her full name, Bhagirathi, when I speak about her to others. How hard are women to please! And yet my Vithya (the Deity at Pandharpur) knows how Malhari loves his wife and lives for her in this world of misery!"

Malhari's Doctrine.

"If that is so," I said to Malhari, "here is a proposal I make. You say you have a share in your ancestral lands and that your brothers have been enjoying them without giving you anything for your share of the profits. Ask them for your share; if they refuse, sue for partition, and I will help you with money. File a suit and recover your share." That offer was by no means tempting to Malhari. The blood on his face rose; he exclaimed, "Sir, Malhari is not to be tempted in that way. Go back to my lands, and fall again into the snare of the world! And that after I have once abandoned it and given myself up to my Vithya?" (the God at Pandharpur). "No, no, to accept your offer would be perdition for Malhari, who has given up *samsara*" (the world and family). "Now, Malhari," said I, "you wrong yourself there again. Who will say you have given up the world and worldliness when you have a wife, and you go about abegging for her and yourself?" He answered: "Sir, I am a Mahar, the lowest of the low, with only this much to comfort me that at the leading of the palanquin of the saint Chokha Mela to Pandharpur, I am given a prominent place. What do I know; what can I understand? Because I have a wife and beg, you say I am yet of the world and as worldly as any of you. Be it so! I am only following my Guru. He directed me and here I am. Call me what you like, whether a worldly man or an ascetic. Enough for me to live for my God Vithya and my wife Bhagu. She is my Parvati (i.e., goddess.) I cannot give up either—they are my salvation. What needs a Mahar more, or any man who cares for his soul?"

I met Malhari this year again, more feeble than last year, but spiritually as alert, with all his crudeness of creed. As I was busy reading one morning, his voice greeted me: "Hari Vithale!" he began, invoking the name of his Deity Vithoba. "Malhari is come, alive, not dead, though he tried his best to die at Pandharpur last Kartiki. That thief Vithya" (meaning the God Vithoba) "has sent me back alive, though I wanted to die." "Malhari," said I, "how irreverent you are when you speak thus of your god! You call him a thief?" He was unabashed and replied. "And why not, when he won't have me out of this life and robs me of my right to die and get rid of this world of sorrows." So saying Malhari prayed and sang his hymns for me and parted with these words, before proceeding to Pandharpur:

"Saheb, Malhari may not live to see you again. If he dies, there is his Bhagu" (wife), "his *samsara*. She is to Malhari the goddess Parvati," and, clasping her and crying, he said to me and begged: "If Malhari dies, take care of his Bhagu, who has made his life."

IV. Hari the Householder

Malhari the Mahar, of whom I wrote in my last article, presents himself as one of the numerous class of Hindus, who, betaking themselves to what they consider asceticism, live as beggars and form the idle portion of the community, the despair of statesmen and the burden of society on whose charity they live. Begging, it is said, has become a profession in India; and Hindu society has gone on countenancing it on religious grounds. Charity is regarded as the prime mark of duty on the authority of sacred texts; and to turn out a beggar without giving him something is considered impious. But the texts have been misunderstood. The charity that is commended is that to a deserving person, not to all indiscriminately. The Brahmin by the very essence of his being is required to live a life of self-denial; begging as an incentive to simple living and corrective of luxury has become the Brahmin's birth-right. He set the example; and it has filtered down more or less to the masses. "That is the road for all which is trodden by the *shistas*," meaning the wise, says a sacred text which has become proverbial among Hindus. The Brahmin as the wise led the way for one purpose; the idle follow it for another. But for all that, let us not misjudge the heart of Hinduism in this respect from the number of beggars that throng the streets in India. The Hindu by tradition and *Shastra* is a householder; and the householder's sense of dignity and self-respect prevails, to an extent perhaps unknown to many or most of us who judge from what we see on the surface, in the streets or in the market place,—but known to him who visits huts and cottages and gets an insight into the souls of their inmates. How often have I met in my village rambles with proofs of this hidden heart of Hinduism! One incident among many I have come across will suffice—and it is an incident which has taught me a lesson in humility.

The Dignity of the Householder.

One morning, as I was out for a walk in a village, I came across a group of men, women, and children, all Marathas. They had travelled in bullock carts from a city and were journeying to their village, because the season of cultivation was near. They unyoked the

bullocks to rest awhile before marching on. As often happens in such cases, the men were all quarrelling, the women were unpacking to cook food, and the children were crying. It was all a babble of tongues. As I stood observing, I found one child piteously crying to its mother for something to eat. The mother, busy unpacking, was chiding the child: "Dead thing, keep quiet, what can I give you to eat here in this jungle?" The sight of the crying child moved me and I said to the mother: "Look here, there is within a few yards from here a man selling mangoes. Buy some and give to the child. Here are some copper coins for you to buy." I made the appeal, expecting response. But the woman turned her anger from the child to me and said, "A Bajirao has come!" Bajirao was a Peshwa, who lived ostentatiously and any man who makes a parade of his wealth is called a Bajirao. "A Bajirao has come!" continued the woman; "Do you think we are beggars that you offer money? Keep your copper to yourself, we have hands and feet and can work and earn like you." I thrust the coins back into my pocket and attempted to explain but the woman would not listen. She kept on saying: "If you are a Bajirao, be so at home. Don't insult us because we are poor." Soon the woman's husband, noticing the incident, appeared on the scene. He was more calm than his wife. I told him what had occurred; he said: "My wife, sir, is right. We are workmen, though poor, and live on what little we earn by our toil. It is a shame to live on charity." For thousands of beggars that we meet, how many more there are who stand by that sentiment in their lives! The former are the degradation, the latter the dignity of Hinduism—the dignity of its householder, not of its hermit.

A Typical Example.

Of this dignity, my friend Hari the householder is a typical example. Him I met in one of my village rambles one evening. Two Kunbis, whom I did not know, were walking along the village road; one had in his hand a *sari*, a pink cloth such as is worn by Hindu women. He was quietly listening while the other kept on talking. I was within hearing distance and felt interested in the talk. It was all about high prices, and high wages. "Wages rise and yet living is dear. The play of God—isn't it so, Hari!" Hari was the man with the *sari* in his hand. His companion went on: "You have peace under this Sirkar; you can work and none can rob. And yet coin is losing in value. What my father got for a rupee I cannot

get for five rupees. God's play again! Can you account for it, Hari?" Hari was not a currency man or rupee reformer. He was only listening—at least seemed to listen, he gave no response to his companion's question. Something was apparently weighing on his mind, and his companion shortly discovered that. "What ails you, Hari, to-day? You are silent and seem depressed." Hari broke his long silence and said: "It is this *sari* which bothers me." "The *sari*? What about it, my man?" asked the companion. Hari answered: "It is of an inferior quality and I am not sure she of my house" (meaning his wife), "will like it." "But why should that trouble you? Women must take what their husbands give and what matters it so long as your wife gets a *sari* to wear! What a fool to bother about a wife and her *sari*?" That was the companion's philosophy. But Hari's view of home life was higher. "Ganu!" he said to his companion, "you talk like that to me but I know how you fear your wife at home. Let your wife make you miss your food one day and you will know what it is to have a wife and displease her."

A Kunbi and his Wife.

Conversation between the two would have run on and I should have gleaned perhaps more of the philosophy of home life from these two rustics, whom I was following within hearing distance all the while, had I not rather hastily intervened. At this juncture that last remark of Hari started my mind like lightning. Though I did not know the man, I thought I should at once take the familiar air of conversation with him. "Well said, Hariba! You don't mind my asking you why you have been worrying so much over that *sari*. You take it for your wife. Why do you think she won't like it?" "Saheb," he answered, "it is this way. When I attend a marriage or other ceremony in my caste, I try to dress my best; if I feel like that, why should not my wife feel likewise on her own account?" "But, Hariba, Ganu has just told you wives should take what husbands give them and you yourself but just now spoke to Ganu as if you thought a wife was made to cook for and serve her husband. Why then do you care so much for what your wife will say about the *sari* you have bought for her?" "Saheb," said Hari "there is a saying: *bayko kayto samsara*" (it is the wife who makes the life). *Nahi bayko, nahi ghar, nahi swarga. i.e.* No wife, no home, no heaven." "My good man," I asked him, "where did you learn this wisdom from?" Hari replied: "Where does a Kunbi learn from? From his *bapdada* (his ancestors)." That was how Hari

philosophised in his untutored and yet to me valuable way. I wanted to philosophise in my turn. "Look here, Hariba! You value your wife so much; I infer she is a reasonable woman or else you would not speak of her with respect. But now tell me, are there many of your fellows who try to please their wives like you? Are there not many who ill-treat their wives?" "Ill-treat?" answered Hari, "some there be, but, we Kunbis know the worth of a wife; she works with and for us, and if we beat her, we know we cannot do without her, she can do something worse than beating—and, Saheb, let me tell you if you will believe me, if husbands beat wives, wives know how to make life hot for husbands, though they won't beat in return." "Ah! Hari," cried I, "that is what you fear will happen to-day to you when you return home and present yourself to her with this gift of an inferior *sari*. It is not love but fear of her that troubles you." Hari was ready with his reply: "Call it love or call it fear, Saheb. What do we Kunbis know about either? All we are taught by our elders is to have a wife and to keep her pleased, because she makes *samsara* (the family)." Here we parted but not before I comforted Hari with some advice: "Have you children, Hari?" "Yes, Saheb, I have by God's grace." "Well then, I will tell you a way that strikes me to get you out of this worry about the *sari*. Should your wife grumble, because it is inferior in quality, tell her you have saved money just for her sake and your children's." "Well, Saheb, that is godly advice. and I will follow it, though this fool of a Hari had not the least idea of saving money for his wife and children when he bought the *sari* in the bazar. I bought it, because there was none better to buy."

V. Man's Cause is Woman's.

There are among us those—and their number is large—whose blind patriotism and prejudice against the West leads them to think that every great thing conceived or done in the West, from Darwin's evolution down to Edison's invention, from the steam-engine to the aeroplane, was known to ancient Hindus and that we have nothing to learn from but everything to teach to the nations of Europe and America. Only the other day one of these blind patriots lectured at Poona that chemistry and physiology were known to our ancestors much better than to modern Europe and that the medical science of the present day was mere child's play before what ancient India knew of medicine. The late Mr. Justice Telang used to tell us of a typical instance of this want of judgment among us. A Hindu graduate in Law and Arts, who had held a high judicial office in a Native State and afterwards taken to the legal profession in Bombay, once observed to him: "I believe every bit of the Ramayana to be sober history." It is this kind of exaggeration and lack of the critical faculty that retard progress. Nothing is lost, everything is gained by a dispassionate and sober examination of our past. It is no disparagement of our ancient literature, science, and religion to confess where it lacked. There is a great deal to be proud of in it, but what that is must be discerned wisely and well.

One thing to be proud of in that respect is the ideal of womanhood as our ancient sages conceived it. "Woman's cause is man's." So sang Tennyson: and every schoolboy in India knows it by heart. But the song of the heart of Hinduism was even sweeter: "Man's cause is woman's." From what I have said of my two friends, Malhari the Mahar and Hari the Householder as types of Hindu manhood, one thing is clear that even the most illiterate and lowliest Hindu realises somehow that it is the woman who makes or mars man—that she is his *samsara* or world. This faith has gone deep into the soul of Hinduism, though in its actual process through the centuries it has got distorted. Of preceptors, the mother stands the prime, says a sacred text which, paraphrased in the words of Henry Drummond's Ascent of Man, means that "the machinery of Nature is designed in the last resort to turn out mothers." Man, as I pointed out in my

second article, lives for duty, wealth, desires and salvation (*dharma, artha, kama* and *moksha*). These, says another text, can be attained mainly through woman. And the spirit of these texts has entered into the daily life of the people; hence that epigram of my friend Hari, the householder: "No wife, no home, no heaven." It is the Tennysonian idea of modern times affirmed even better ages ago by the heart of Hinduism.

The Way to Salvation.

Having laid down that the life of a householder leads to salvation, that is, to *atmadarshana* or the realisation in this life of the Supreme Soul in man, the sages went on to describe how the man should live as a householder for the purposes of that realisation. A householder must first have a house, called in Sanskrit *griha*, to live in. What is "a house?" A building of brick and mortar, or of wood, or stone, one would say. "No, that is not it," says in effect the lawyer Apararka in a spirit of veiled humour. A *griha* or house means a wife. She is the *griha* and therefore the *grihini*, the holder of the house. Without her, the material thing called home is soulless for the purpose of a householder's life. Hence the famous Sanskrit saying familiar to Hinduism: "A house is not the house but it is the wife who is the house."

With their minds fastened on that idea, the sages, who gave us laws, declared: "Woman is born pure and undefiled." That is the intonation, for instance, of that premier of Hindu law-givers, Yajnyavalkya, in these sacred words: *medhya vai yoshito hyataha.* The characters of Sita, Damayanti, Savitri and a host of other women pictured in the Puranas have become proverbial as models of chaste womanhood. But, I humbly conceive, to get to the heart of Hinduism and hear its note of woman's worth, we must go to something anterior to the Ramayana or the Mahabharata or the Puranas.

Nachiketa.

Two figures pictured in the Upanishads stand out as typical of the great heart of Hinduism—one that of Nachiketa, a boy, the other that of Uma, a woman, the former presented as the ideal of manhood, the latter as the ideal of womanhood.

Nachiketa's story, shortly stated, is this. His father performed a religious ceremony and, as was customary, gave all his possessions as fee to the priests. These possessions included certain cows. The cows were old and decrepit,

incapable of giving milk and barren. Nachiketa did not like such futile gifts. He thrice inquired of his father why he gave useless cows as fees to the priests and receiving no answer, asked: "Father, you have given your all but me. To whom do you give me?" That roused the father's ire and the father in his anger said: "I give you to Yama, the god of Death." "Be thou dead," said the father. Nachiketa obeyed and went to the abode of Yama, the god of Death. Yama pleased with the boy's faith and piety, asked him to beg for three boons which he said would be granted. Nachiketa asked first for restoration to him of his father's favour, secondly for a knowledge of "the heaven-giving fire." These two boons were granted. The last and most important remained. "What becomes of man after death? Where goes and how fares his immortal soul? Teach me this. That is the third boon I ask." Yama told the boy that the question had been left undecided by the gods of old because it was not easy of comprehension; so he asked Nachiketa not to press the question. But the boy was persistent. Yama sought to draw him away by promising him riches, kingdoms, all the wealth and pleasures of the world. Nachiketa said he did not care for the transitory glories of earth—he would know all of the soul's fate after death. And Yama had to yield and gratify his curiosity.

We Hindus are all Nachiketas more or less, though we have lost his decision of character and persistence of purpose, whether old, adult or young. Nine out of ten of us instinctively feel inclined to hang on the lips of any one who would tell us what goes on in the world hereafter and what becomes of the soul after death. The unseen is more potent for us than the seen. Lacking the nerve and verve of Nachiketa, we dream the unseen, we pursue the seen and both in a clumsy way and fail to realise either. The faculty or visionary power of Nachiketa is a power for good, if rightly cultivated; it is weakness, if it is misdirected by mere dreaming, idling and pleasure-seeking. But the faculty is there. Hindu boys may cavil at Christianity and ridicule the Bible; but let a Christian missionary pitch a tent and hold forth on the Bible, swarms of young Hindus will gather and listen, for they want to know, like Nachiketa of old, what there is to say of the soul and life eternal. What they come to know with one ear, they may, as many do, let out with the other, but the curiosity is there. Nachiketa lives, however obscured, in us all.

If we, Hindu men, are editions of Nachiketa, however feeble, our women are editions of the Uma of the Upanishads. They have retained the lustre of their prototype more than

we men have retained the grit of our prototype, Nachiketa. Uma's story is this. The gods, having won victory over the demons, became proud. They boasted that the victory was due to their own prowess, not to God's grace. To tame their pride God sent down the woman Uma, and she opened their eyes and made them realise that their power came from the Supreme Spirit. And they learnt the wisdom of humility. The lesson is—woman, be she mother, wife, sister, or friend is destined to be man's mentor and reformer. She is made to tame him.

The Homely Life.

If she fails in that mission among us, whose is the fault? Not hers. Hinduism of later ages has kept her down and she has taken her revenge. She has taken us down with her. But for all that, she retains the potential power of Uma to humble us. How many a Hindu wife has sacrificed herself silently for her husband and striven to reform him when erring! How many a husband has run riot with his life and when ruin has overtaken him, relented when it was too late, and felt his last comfort in his wife's silent sacrifice and faithful though futile attempt to redeem him! One incident will illustrate my point. Just as I entered on my career as a member of the legal profession thirty-one years ago, an old Hindu visited me one day and I have never forgotten the advice he gave me and the tears he shed in recounting his own experience of life: "My dear boy, I am an old man and may die any moment. I feel interested in you and have come to congratulate you on your success at the law examination. But better than my congratulations is my advice. Beware of a voluptuous life. Lead a homely one. Here I am—eyes almost gone, weak of body and ailing. What do you think it is due to? In the prime of life, I led the life of a nightwanderer. I would return home at 3 or 4 in the morning. To see what? My poor wife sitting and waiting with a lamp flickering by her side and with tears in her eyes. For some months she protested and remonstrated; and her reward was my blows and slaps. She gave up that soon because her anger and advice made me worse. Every time I came back like that, I expected her to rate me; and then, I thought, I should beat her. But dear soul! not a word she uttered! As she heard the steps of my feet outside, she quietly opened the door and took me in—she had been watching and waiting for this brute of her husband, all the while tears running down her face. Her silence kept me silent. It brought

remorse, but for the moment only. The sense of pleasure was too strong—and I ran my ruinous course until I became a wreck. Here I am! And now I see, how unworthy I have been of that noble, patient, suffering soul of a woman, my wife. She has taught me by her sufferings the lesson of life. It is too late, and yet not too late. To have a wife like that is to possess God himself. And, decrepit as I am, and gladly as I would leave the life I have ill used, I wish to live only to make amends to her for my past failure. Learn from me and live."

VI. The Art of Achara.

One recurring question which has been perplexing Hindu Society is—why do so many educated Hindus die prematurely? Several medical men and some laymen have attempted to solve the question. Some say it is hard work, forgetting that hard work rarely kills a man. Huxley came to the conviction that the real destroyer of hardworking men was "not their work, but dinners, late hours and the universal humbug and excitement of society." Others say it is the strain and stress of modern life, as if our ancestors who lived strenuous lives had no worries to fight. Old age, according to Vijnaneshwara, the author of the law book Mitakshara, begins not earlier than 70, and a Shudra, he says, if he reaches the age of 80, must be respected by all. That shows what old age meant at one time in India, the climate of which we curse instead of cursing ourselves for our indiscretions in life. We go to other climes for health and long life and become the fools whose eyes are on the ends of the earth.

Hinduism is a creed of Fate, it is said; and to a large extent it is so, as we find it. But our law-giver Yajnyavalkya condemned fatalism as a wrong theory and practice of life. If a man reap in the present life the fruit of his actions of a previous life, it follows he can also reap the fruit of his present life here and now. For what means reaping in the present life the fruit of actions of a past life but reaping now the result of the voluntary effort of a past life? Man has *paurasham*, manhood, the power to dare and do. Expanding that *dictum* of the great law-giver, his commentator Vijnaneshwara, whose Mitakshara gives us our Hindu law, explains that a great deal depends on human effort, as is evident from the facts of daily life, and that, if it were not so, if luck were everything and labour nothing, the science of medicine would be useless.

Let us try this *dictum* with reference to the question of longevity, and hear the beat of the heart of Hinduism as to it. The saying is attributed to Henry Ward Beecher that a man ought to be ashamed of himself if he could not live to be 70. Manu, our Hindu law-giver, goes further. He would have said we ought to be ashamed of ourselves if we could not live to be 100. He observes that we can all live to be centenarians. Here is his text: "A man lives to be 100 years old, even though

he be devoid of distinguishing marks or qualities, if he be a man of invariably good *achara* (conduct), has strong faith, and is free from the vice of fault-finding."

A Story and a Moral.

The force of this text hangs on the word *achara*, which has played for better and for worse an important part in the regulation of Hindu life, sacred and secular. *Achara* means good or righteous conduct, behaviour, or action. In the religious sense, it means ritual. An orthodox Hindu is an ultra ritualist—the Brahmin especially. The rules prescribed for his daily life are laid down with minute particularity—how to rise, stand, speak, pray, sleep and so on—as if he was at every step in danger of contamination from the world. The orthodox Brahmin walking along a public road or in a private house will go about skipping as if he must avoid at every step anything likely to pollute him. Hence in certain parts of the Canarese country, Brahmins are called skippers, men who do not walk straight and steady but jump like frogs. The sight is rarely seen now in cities, but in villages it is familiar; and even in cities it is not absent. Go to Bhuleshwar or other places where genuine orthodoxy meets your eye! We laugh at this but before we laugh, let us look to the genesis of this skipping habit of the orthodox Brahmin. Dr. Turner, the Health Officer of Bombay, wants, in order to prevent the spread of tuberculosis, a law making it penal for persons to spit on public roads. In these days of liberty, such a law is not likely to be easily welcomed. But I presume the orthodox Hindu, if he knows his Hinduism, must gladly accept it as helpful to his ritualistic sense. He skips as he walks because he is afraid of putting his feet on the spittle of people and getting contaminated. If he no longer skips, that is because the public road, being everybody's, has become nobody's, and the Brahmin has learnt to spit like the Shudra. It is the comedy of caste —all purity for the twice-born, and all impurity for the Shudra; but the Shudra has taken his revenge and dragged down those who have kept him low.

Spirit of Ancient Law.

The rules of *achara* laid down for the Hindu are tediously minute, most of them seem to our modern sense grotesque, and many ridiculous. But they were laid down in the infancy of society, when its members, in the earlier stages of their evolution, had to be spoon-fed like children. We have got beyond that stage and

need not observe them literally or mostly. St. Paul said that he who was born of the Spirit needed not the bond and fear of law to restrain him. So also the saints of the Bhakti school of Hinduism, which emphasised the law of love as the best and simplest worship and law of life, have [illegible] life of love of God and Man [illegible] merit acquired from observance of the rules of *achara*. But though the rules are out of date for us, their spirit remains—and that spirit is the heart of Hinduism. The rules were framed on the principle which, borrowing substantially the language of our law-giver Yajnyavalkya and his commentator, Vijneshwara, might be summed up in these words: "Begin with the care of thy body and [illegible] with the cure of thy soul."

That sums up the rules of *achara* prescribed for the householder, or the honest citizen. Fasten your attention on their leading lights. The householder must rise early in the morning, for the early hours of the morning, just when the shades of the darkness of night slowly give way to the light of day, are the hours of God (*Brahma Muhurta*), fit for communion and meditation, because it is then that the gods drink ambrosia, the nectar of Heaven. And it is then man can gather up his thoughts and steady himself by prayer to meet the work and worry of the day's life. That is *Sandhya*, a word which literally means "the bordering circle between the darkness and the dawn;" and this rule of *achara* of Hinduism reminds us of what one of the sweet singers of Christendom has said in pointing out that "all nations and all faiths of cultivated men have chosen the twilight hour, morning and evening, for their devotion." The rules of Hindu *achara* are very particular about cleaning the teeth and bathing. There is a ceremony (y[illegible] the cleaning of teeth; it is call[illegible] It has a hymn:- used for cleaning life, strength, children, cattle, a[illegible] wisdom, insight." Why, bark used for cleaning health and strength d[illegible] medical science; and see [illegible] Europe are waking up to be careful about their teeth. Then comes bathing—"to bathe is to perform an act of high religious merit," says the leading text; and from Hindus Englishmen have borrowed the habit of daily bathing. Other nations in Europe are still backward—but they too are slowly learning. "The wise ever bathe," said and sang Guru Nanak. I will

not encumber this article with details on this subject of the householder's *uchara* or routine of life; but suffice it to say that it all comes to a careful exercise of the body and mind as the means for the elevation of the Soul—in short, a well-ordered life of hard work and rare enjoyment, with [illegible] centred in the Supreme above and th[illegible]ted on the earth below.

The Ruin of the Hindu.

It is a travesty of th[illegible]rt of Hinduism to say that it treats th[illegible]ody as nothing, the soul as everything. That teaching, countenanced by some Puran[illegible] and bigoted priests, has been the ruin Hindu. The Garuda Purana with all its nery strikes the true note when it says that person can attain the four objects of life—*dharma, artha, kama* and *moksha*—without the body and that therefore the body should be well preserved by pure living. Realising the value of health to holiness, the Nandi Purana extols the philanthropist whose charities are devoted to the erection of health homes and sanatoria for the benefit of the public. My friend, Sir Bhalchandra Krishna, who has laid the Hindu public under deep obligations to him by means of the sanatorium for consumptives at Karla, but whom the rich of the Hindu public have yet to help for the success of the institution, cannot do better than inscribe on its portals the ancient verse which says:—"That man, who, charitably minded, gives money for or erects sanatoria, is the philanthropist; he has achieved the true purpose of life; he is sanctified." For realisation of the Supreme Soul, man must think and act; for pure and strong thought which comes of meditation (Yoga), there must be first purity and strength of body (*satva shuddhi*), and for that purity and strength there must be the eating of good and pure [illegible]s the teaching of philosophers. Cleanliness is [illegible] of Hinduism is itself godli[illegible]f body leading to [illegible]ng. That is the well-[illegible]or the householder—[illegible]upied mind, a seeking of pure [illegible] pleasures, meditation in the small hours of the morning and in the evening—all summed up in a righteous life.

Club Life.

We laugh at these old quaint rules of *achara*. Their spirit was for good and must be good. We die young, or, if we live long,

we make wrecks of ourselves because we neglect the rules of *achara*. We are however waking up to the pure needs of the body; physical exercises, rules of hygiene, are being understood. But the age with its light has its darkness too. Clubs, gymkhanas, social parties and recreations—these will save us only if we bear in mind that health means holiness. The present Bishop of London (Dr. Ingram) the other day said in his lecture on "Ideals" that when clubs were started to afford opportunities for healthy recreation and education, they often ended in cheap billiards, and led to exciting pleasures. Many a Hindu has been ruined that way, but I hope not many are being ruined now in point of body and mind. Back to the ancient highway of Hinduism—its *Sadachara*, the spirit, not the letter of its rules of a life of orderliness regulated by the light of what is best and inspiring in the teachings of the modern West!

VII. Love the Law of Life.

No religion is worth the name which has not taken its stand on the rule that love is the law of life. The Cross stands for right-thinking men as the historic symbol of that law, and is the inspirer of modern civilisation. However much that civilisation may seem to fall short of its ideals, though materialism appears to obscure now and again the life and work of its spirit, the Cross of Christ is the light of advancing mankind. "Love the Lord thy God," and "love thy neighbour as thyself," the immense truth of that law was proved to Carlyle by the trite example of an Irishwoman described by him. She, a poor destitute thing, living in a parish, went from door to door, asking for alms of the parishioners. All turned her out; want and distress led to disease; she caught the typhoid and died. And dying she gave the disease to the parishioners and the parish died with her. That is the problem of life solved by the sacred words: "Love thy neighbour as thyself." What more do we want to make life worth living?

A War of Words.

How stands the heart of Hinduism as to that? What is its answer to that question? As in the world of Christianity, there has been a war of words over such questions as "Is man saved by faith or by works?" so in the ranks of Hinduism, the battle has been fought over the question: "Is man saved by *karma* (action) or by *Jnana* (knowledge)." The controversy has raged for centuries, but man is more than controversy. God and Religion were before Reason began. Reason never created a religion, said Hegel, and that is true. The Hindu philosophers sought knowledge hoping to gain love from it. But the multitude were not saved by the logic-chopping faculty until there arose the school of Bhakti or Love which is represented by the teachings of the "Song Celestial," called the Bhagavad-Gita. Its doctrine is the same as that of "Love the Lord thy God; love thy neighbour as thyself," and might be aptly summed up in the words of Browning:—

"So let us say—not, since we know we love,
But rather, since we love, we know enough."

The history of this Bhakti school forms the most bright page in the dark volume of the history of Hinduism. It sought to level up the masses; it tried to give knowledge to the

Shudra; it aimed at breaking the pride of the priest; and, as Mahar devotees say when they sing and praise God, the degraded castes of Hinduism, abandoned by the Vedas and the Shastras, despised by the twice-born, treated as the filth of the earth, would have been crushed out of existence, had not the saints of the Bhakti school come to their rescue. They live still the lowest but that they live at all is due to the life and heart put into them by this Great Heart of Love of the Bhakti school which has the Bhagavad Gita for its Bible.

The Doctrine of Love.

The doctrine of Love as the fulfilling of all law is not absent from earlier teachings. For instance, after describing the four stages of life, the student, the householder, the anchorite and the ascetic, and specifying the duties and symbols of each stage, Manu says that a man is not saved by his badge, meaning no man earns salvation by mere formal observance of the rules of any of the four stages; and he puts his point neatly:—"Not the external badge but it is brotherliness which is the cause of *dharma* (duty)." Our other law-giver Yajnyavalkya follows the same line. "In whatever *ashrama* or stage of life a man be, let him remember duty consists in sympathetic behaviour towards others." It is this doctrine which gradually developed into the religion of Love—it assumed a precise shape in Buddhism and was taken up principally by the Bhakti school which proclaimed that love of man leads to the love of God. We all know the legend about Buddha. He met once the Giant of Hate. The latter drew his sword to kill Buddha and said: "Love shall yield to hate." Buddha replied: "Then I love even you." That subdued the Giant and he was turned into a dove, which ever afterwards hovered over the head of Buddha.

According to the Bhakti school, which makes Duty (*dharma*) hang on the love of God and single-minded devotion to Him, God's devotees are threefold. (1). Those entirely absorbed in the contemplation of God and thinking of nothing else; (2) those who, loving and contemplating God, help all their fellows without distinction as His Children and suffer and sacrifice themselves for their sakes; and (3) those who contemplate and love God but have not acquired the power of helping others. The first and last are not the true devotees. It is the second class who are the most beloved of God—those who carry their love of God into actual life and live for others by the faithful performance of duty in the spirit of self-sacrifice. It is they who become godlike.

Failing of the School.

This school of Love has indeed failed to raise Hindu society as Christianity has raised society elsewhere. The untouchables—the pariah, the mahar, the *tiyar*—and the treatment accorded to them form the standing disgrace of Hinduism. But the heart of Hinduism is sound, if we will only hearken unto its still small voice. Caste is the curse of India as it exists and has existed in its present form. And yet Hinduism worships Mahar Saints, and delights to tell how Suta, the reciter of Puranas, a *chandala*, the most despised of castes, became by his life of devotion one of the worshipped of men. Suta was a child of a Shudra father and a Brahmin mother, and yet his devotion made him famous. Says he:—"Happy do I feel today that, though the issue of a mixed marriage, yet by reason of the kind regard I have received from these revered elders, I congratulate myself upon my worthiness as a man. The privilege of converse with the great and good accorded to me has quickly removed the weight of low birth that lay heavy on my heart."

And here let me conclude by illustrating my point by one of my interviews with my friend, Malhari the Mahar, with whom I have already made my indulgent reader familiar. He was one day recounting to me his sorrows and struggles with tears in his eyes and concluded: "sorrow has been my share but it has been sweet." "Why?" I asked and before Malhari answered, his wife, whose eyes were also wet, said: "Why but because there is He with us who seeketh us, sinners as we are!" When this was said I had for my companions two friends, a Christian missionary and his wife. Those words of Malhari's wife struck the deepest chord of sympathy into the heart of my lady friend and she remarked: "That is the Christian idea of the lost sheep and the Great Shepherd—God seeking sinners! Where did this woman get that from?" We had no time to cross examine Malhari's wife then, because I was intent upon hearing him, not his wife. But next day when Malhari and his wife saw me again, my lady friend urged me to question the woman and find out how she had learnt that God seeketh sinners. "Bhagirathi," I said, addressing Malhari's wife, "You spoke yesterday of God seeking sinners," (the original words in Marathi were to *ahena amha papyana dhoond toi*"); "What did you mean? where did you learn that?" The woman was confused. She replied: "What do I an ignorant woman know?" Malhari came to her rescue. He explained that his Vithya, meaning his God at Pandharpur was always with

the sinner to correct him by his love and mercy.

That idea of God seeking sinners is the central truth of the Bhakti school of Hinduism. It lies undeveloped and obscure in the minds of millions of low caste Hindus, as we call them. But it is there, constituting the heart of Hinduism. And how darkened is that heart because of erring faiths and preposterous customs, which hold high as Hinduism.

The Shastras.

There are those now who say that social reform must be based on the Shastras. What are the Shastras? The suggestion is made that Government should appoint a Commission to determine the fundamental principles of one portion of the Shastras which constitutes Hindu law. Commissions, says a proverb, are screens. In this case Commissions must necessarily prove confusion worse confounded. The *Shastras* themselves say: "Do not follow that which is contrary to the popular voice, even though the Shastras prescribe it." Vijnaneshwara, author of the Mitakshara, again and again cites that saying of the Shastras with unqualified approval. And the Parashara Smriti, which is held to rule Hinduism in this age, tells us that whatever prevails in any particular age as the duty of the twice-born must not be condemned, because they, the twice-born, are the products of their age. Literally translated, the text says: "they are Yuga rupa," which means that the twice-born castes of any particular age take their forms and usages from their times. That means—adapt yourself to the needs of the age and your environment; do not be led by the letter of the Shastras, because men change with age. If in this age of commerce of nations and elevation of the masses, we find that caste as it exists is a peril and that the treatment accorded to the untouchables is a sin socially and politically, we must hark back to the heart of Hinduism sounded by Vijnaneshwara and Parashara in the manner noted above. "Universal Love is the law of life," that is at the bottom the keynote of that heart struck by nothing more musical in Hindu literature and religion than the beautiful Aryan couplet, of which that ever to be remembered of Oriental scholars, Sir William Jones, has remarked that, "written at least 3,000 years before Christ," it "pronounces the duty of a good man, even in the moment of his destruction, to consist not only in forgiving but even in a desire of benefiting his destroyer, as the *sandal* tree, in the instant of its overthrow, sheds perfume on the axe which fells it."

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